

**Shelly
Manne
& His Men**

play the
music of
Johnny Williams
from the
TV series

Checkmate



G. Deel

CONTEMPORARY  **MONO M3599**

PRODUCED BY CONTEMPORARY RECORDS, INC.

Shelly Manne & His Men Play "Checkmate"

SHELLY MANNE, *drums*; CONTE CANDOLI, *trumpet*; RICHIE KAMUCA, *tenor sax*; RUSS FREEMAN, *piano*; CHUCK BERGHOFER, *bass*.

CHECKMATE IS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TV shows of the current season.⁽¹⁾ The three heroes of *Checkmate*—Sebastian Cabot, Doug McClure, and Anthony George—aim to stop crime before it happens, accompanied by the expected thrills, chills, and danger—and by Johnny Williams' excellent score which strikes precisely the right balance between mayhem and music.⁽²⁾

Shelly Manne, a friend and associate of Williams, held the percussion chair in the studio orchestra which recorded the *Checkmate* score. He realized that most of Williams' themes would lend themselves admirably to a jazz treatment by his own group. "What attracted me to the music," says Shelly, "was the mood the pieces create—you might call it a 'modal' mood. This is particularly true of *Isolated Pawn*, *King Swings*, *En Passant*. By modal I mean there aren't a lot of changes and because of it you can create more exciting rhythmic interest. With only a few changes as in *Milestones* or Coltrane's *My Favorite Things*, the rhythm can create tension and mounting excitement through use of ostinato effects. Oddly enough, the 'monotony' is what helps create the intensity!"

Shelly also likes Williams' melodic lines. "They are good jazz lines. He didn't conceive of *Checkmate* as a jazz score, but because Johnny is also a jazz musician, he knows how to write lines which lay just right for jazz blowing."

IN THE MONTHS BEFORE THIS RECORDING, Manne & His Men played the *Checkmate* music for receptive audiences at The Manne-Hole, Shelly's jazz club in Hollywood. In this way the seven themes took their places on an equal footing with the standards, jazz originals, and jazz classics which comprise the group's extended repertoire.⁽³⁾

The characteristic element which distinguishes these performances from Williams' own first-rate big band version of the score album, is the extended improvisation by the soloists. The quality of improvisation is an elusive thing. It is primarily a personal and emotional expression. To play well, a musician has to believe in what he is doing. In the case of *Checkmate*, Manne and his colleagues had become thoroughly enthusiastic about the Williams music, and looked forward to the recording session with much more than ordinary anticipation.

By LESTER KOENIG
December 13, 1961

(1) *Checkmate*, 8:30-9:30 p.m. (PST) over the CBS-TV network.

(2) Williams scored the original *Checkmate* series, from 1960 through the summer of 1961.

(3) For examples see Live! Shelly Manne & His Men at The Manne-Hole, Contemporary M3593/4, stereo S7593/4, a two-volume set, recorded in Shelly's club, containing king-size performances of Love for Sale, How Could It Happen to a Dream, Softly as in a Morning Sunrise, The Champ, On Green Dolphin Street, What's New?, If I Were a Bell, Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye, A Gem from Tiffany. Detailed biographies of Manne & His Men will be found in Leonard Feather's album notes.



Sebastian Cabot, Doug McClure & Anthony George— they occupy an hour of the nation's Wednesday evenings.

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER:

PROBABLY THE GREATEST SATISFACTION a composer can get is when an artist decides to play and record his work, particularly when the artist is of the caliber of Shelly Manne with his present group. The pieces contained in this album were selected by Shelly from a larger group of things that I had written for the TV show, *Checkmate*. Each was written for a different segment of the show and was associated with the particular personality for whom it was written.

I hold the conviction, not by any means alone, that it is a composer's job not only to create the melodic and harmonic details of his music but also the timbre, that is, the final sound or color. My gratitude to Shelly, therefore, may seem contradictory, for what Shelly has done here is to take each piece out of its original setting and put it into a setting all his own. Herein lies, I think, the most remarkable aspect of this album. Shelly has given each piece a mood and a quality quite different from all the rest and while doing so has retained what was my original thought concerning each piece. This is an exceptional accomplishment, particularly for a jazz group of this size, and a practice which should, I think, be a more important part of contemporary jazz. The variety of colors and moods that Shelly and the group have achieved here is truly amazing.

In addition to acknowledging wonderful performances by each member of the group, I think special attention should be called to the invaluable contribution made here by Russ Freeman. Russ is truly one of the most important pianists in jazz today. He has a perception and sensitivity unequalled by all but a very few.

My sincere thanks to Shelly and Contemporary Records for this presentation of the music from *Checkmate*.

By JOHNNY WILLIAMS
December 14, 1961

JOHNNY WILLIAMS, a talented pianist, as well as composer and orchestrator, was exposed to both jazz and classical music from his childhood. His father was a well-known drummer of the swing era, and Johnny, who was born in Flushing, New York in 1932, started studying piano at the age of eight. He came to California with his family in 1948 and at North Hollywood High School led his first band with vocalist Barbara Ruick, a fellow student, later to become Mrs. Williams. Since 1955 Williams has been actively at work in Hollywood, composing and conducting for TV (M-Squad, Wagon Train, etc.) and writing backgrounds for many singers. He is also active as a pianist, with jazz albums of his own.

Cover painting of Shelly Manne by George Deel. Cover design by Kershaw, Guidi/Tri-Arts. *Checkmate* photo by CBS. Photos of Manne & Men by Roger Marshutz. Album cover and liner © 1962 by Contemporary Records, Inc. Printed in U.S.A.

Side 1

CHECKMATE (8.01)
THE ISOLATED PAWN (6.10)
CYANIDE TOUCH (7.46)

Side 2

THE KING SWINGS (5.31)
EN PASSANT (5.45)
FIRESIDE EYES (3.50)
THE BLACK KNIGHT (6.38)

All compositions by Johnny Williams. Published by Hawaii Music, BMI.

Recorded October 17 and 24, 1961 at Contemporary's studio in Los Angeles. Sound by Howard Holzer. Produced by Lester Koenig.



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TECHNICAL DATA: 30-20,000 cycles. Multiple microphone technique featuring AKG C-12 condenser microphones. Presto-tape recorder. Reeves Soundcraft tape. Mastering on Contemporary Records' specially designed, electronically controlled, continuously variable pitch lathe. Westrex feed-back cutting head. Heated stylus, inner diameter quality equalization. VTA playback curve. Custom-made, noise-free vinylite "Grave/Gard" pressing.

CONTEMPORARY M3599
MONOPHONIC

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SHELLY MANNE
& HIS MEN PLAY
"CHECKMATE"

Music composed by Johnny Williams from
the score of Revue Studios' CBS-TV series,
"Checkmate." Hawaii Music, Inc. BMI.

M3599
(LKL 12-365)

Side 1

1. CHECKMATE
2. THE ISOLATED PAWN
3. CYANIDE TOUCH



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Side 2

1. THE KING SWINGS
2. EN PASSANT
3. FIRESIDE EYES
4. THE BLACK KNIGHT

